

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 345 - JUNE 24, 1977

1. ISRAEL. THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED QUICKLY TO PRESENT ITS BASIC FOREIGN POLICY PRECEPTS AND SET THE STAGE FOR TALKS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. ON THE ONE HAND, LIKUD SPOKESMAN HAVE EMPHASIZED THE CONSENSUS AMONG ISRAELIS IN SUPPORT OF LIKUD'S BASIC POSITIONS AND THE CONTINUITY OF THESE POLICIES WITH THOSE OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, LIKUD'S STANCE ON KEY ISSUES REVEALS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ISRAELI POLICIES, DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO PICTURE THEM AS ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED.

2. BEGIN THUS HAS MANAGED TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF MODERATION AND FLEXIBILITY, WHILE QUIETLY ADHERING TO HIS BASIC POSITIONS. HE WANTS TO CONVINCE US THAT HIS FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES HAVE THE BROAD BACKING OF THE ISRAELI

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PUBLIC. MOREOVER, THE MODERATE IMAGE HE HAS WORKED TO CREATE SEEMS TO HAVE MUTED PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF HIS NEW GOVERNMENT. GIVEN THE STRONG OPPOSITION IN

ISRAEL TO THE US APPROACH AND THE LACK OF A GOOD ISSUE ON WHICH TO CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT, THE LABOR/DMC OPPOSITION SEEMS UNWILLING TO CHALLENGE BEGIN

FOR NOW.

3. AS PART OF HIS CAMPAIGN TO FIRM UP HIS BARGAINING POSITION PRIOR TO HIS US VISIT, BEGIN HAS SET FORTH WHAT HE SEES AS THE UNACCEPTABLE, AND THUS NON-NEGOTIABLE, ISSUES:

(A) WITHDRAWAL TO THE PRE-1967 BORDERS, EVEN WITH MINOR ADJUSTMENTS;

(B) A PALESTINIAN STATE OR HOMELAND, EVEN ONE LINKED IN SOME WAY TO JORDAN; AND

(C) ALTERNATIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN EXCHANGE FOR WHAT ISRAELIS REGARD AS DEFENSIBLE BORDERS.

4. THE AMBIGUITY IN BEGIN'S POSITION ON RESOLUTION 242 IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF HIS ATTEMPT TO CAMOUFLAGE HIS HARD-LINE POSITIONS. THE REFERENCE IN THE COALITION'S GUIDELINES TO THE READINESS OF THE GOVERNMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A GENEVA CONFERENCE "ON THE BASIS OF SC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338" WOULD, ON THE SURFACE, APPEAR TO BE A SHIFT TOWARD MODERATION ON BEGIN'S PART. HE RESIGNED FROM ISRAEL'S NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT IN 1970 OVER HIS OPPOSITION TO ENDORSEMENT OF 242 BECAUSE HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL. THE SHIFT, HOWEVER, SECRET

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IS MORE APPARENT THEN REAL. BEGIN HAS DELIBERATELY LEFT UNCLEAR WHETHER THE STATEMENT MEANS HE WOULD AGREE TO 242 AS A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS, OR MERELY FOR ACCEPTING AN INVITATION TO ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. (SECRET)

5. LEBANON. RELATIVELY HEAVY SHELLING OCCURRED YESTERDAY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. CASUALTIES WERE SUFFERED BY BOTH SIDES. THIS ENGAGEMENT WAS THE HEAVIEST IN SEVERAL WEEKS.

6. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MET YESTERDAY WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD IN DAMASCUS TO DISCUSS LEBANESE SUGGESTIONS ON SECURITY IN LEBANON AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS. HE ALSO PLANS TO TRAVEL TO RIYADH, KUWAIT AND CAIRO TO DISCUSS THESE PROBLEMS WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE.

7. THE COMMANDER OF THE RIGHTIST ARMY UNITS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, MAJOR HADDAD, RECENTLY CALLED HIS SMALL ENCLAVES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON THE "LAST FREE CORNER OF LEBANON" WHICH IS NOT OCCUPIED BY EITHER PALESTINIAN OR SYRIAN FORCES. HADDAD IS IN DAILY CONTACT WITH LEBANESE ARMY

HEADQUARTERS. HE DECLARED TO NEWSMEN THAT HE IS A LOYAL LEBANESE SOLDIER AND THAT THE ARMY COMMAND HAS NEVER ORDERED HIM TO STOP FIGHTING. THE GENERAL STAFF APPEAR NOT TO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE HIM. TO DISAVOW HIM WOULD COST THEM MUCH RIGHTIST SUPPORT. HIS POPULARITY THROUGHOUT LEBANON APPEARS TO BE GROWING AS MANY LEBANESE ARE BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH THE SYRIAN PRESENCE.

(CONFIDENTIAL)

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